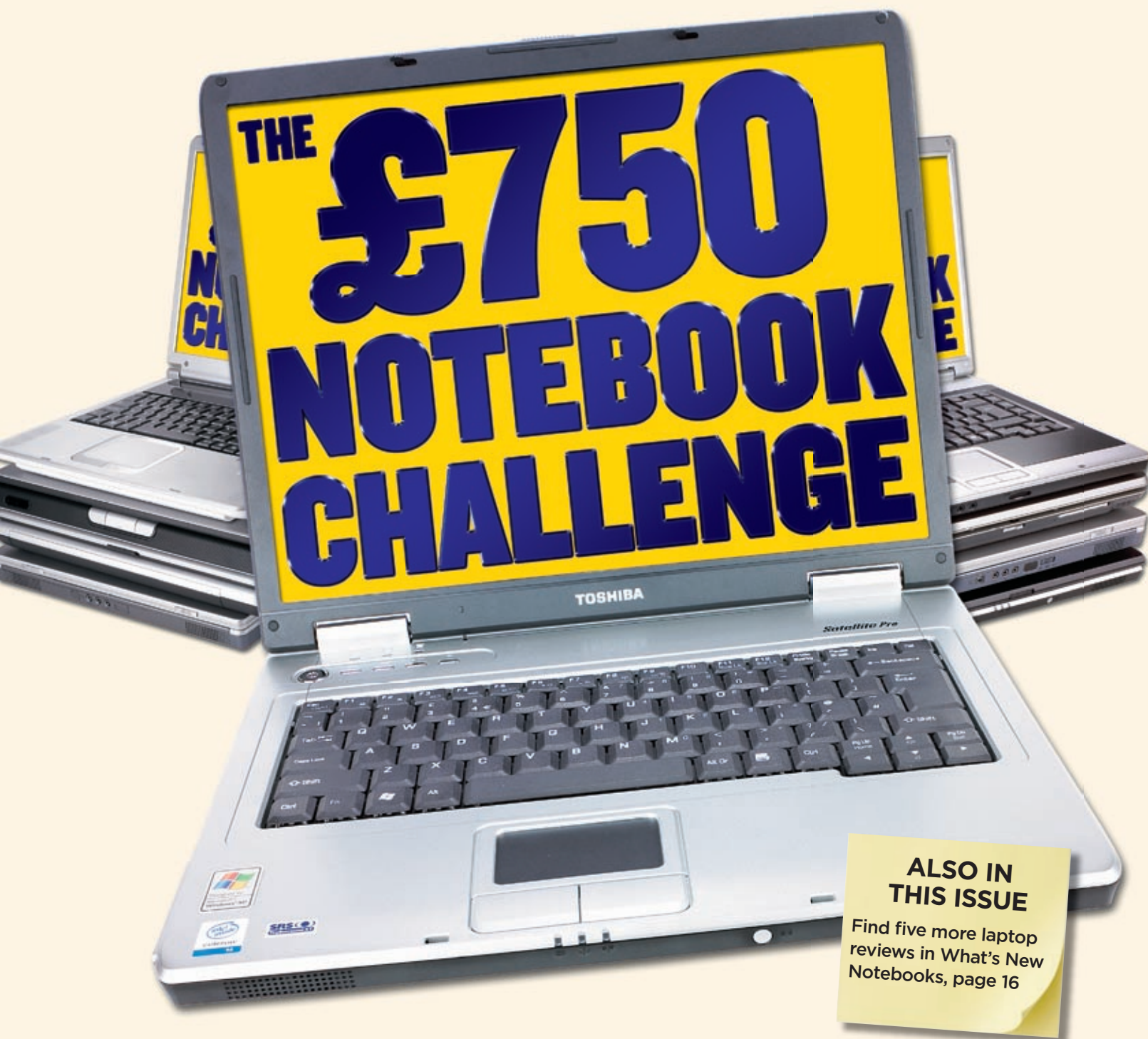


**ALSO IN
THIS ISSUE**

Find five more laptop
reviews in What's New
Notebooks, page 16

If you think spending under £1,000 on a notebook means skimping on features, you're wrong. We've tested nine models that provide extremely capable computing on the move for just £750

IN THIS REVIEW

Acer Aspire 5014WLMi
AJP Z71A
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Mesh Venture CSX
MV Sirius 15 AMD Shopper
Rock Pegasus Ti CS
Toshiba Satellite L10 PSL10E-00M004EN
Watford Aries PowerXS Precision 1005

From ultra-portables to desktop replacements and multimedia machines to portable gaming systems, there is a notebook to suit every kind of computer user. Better still, they're getting cheaper and cheaper. Today the cheapest notebooks can be found for as little as £500, and you can pick up a powerful portable computer ideal for practically any type of task for well under £1,000.

This month we asked nine manufacturers to send us the best notebook computer they could

create for £750 including VAT. The results were impressive. We received powerful desktop replacement machines, multimedia notebooks with high-quality displays and even portable PCs capable of playing the latest 3D games.

Every notebook here is capable of performing everyday computing tasks with ease, but some stand out from the crowd thanks to their remarkable power, features or abilities when away from the desk. Whatever you want from your PC, there's a budget notebook that can meet your needs – we'll help you find it.



CHOOSING A... £750 NOTEBOOK

You can find the perfect balance of performance and features in a low-cost notebook if you know what to look for. Our useful guide will help you with those all-important buying decisions

In our budget notebooks Labs (*Shopper* July 2005), we showed you how £500 will buy a notebook powerful enough for most everyday computing tasks. If you need to do more than word processing and internet work, though, increasing your budget to £750 opens up a range of notebooks with powerful processors, high-quality screens and vivid 3D gameplay. However, even at this higher price, it pays to consider your priorities carefully. Our guide will help you choose a notebook that's perfectly suited to your needs.

THE SPICE OF LIFE

Notebooks can be divided into two groups according to the type of processor they use. The Acer, Mesh and MV systems have desktop processors, which provide plenty of raw power but require a bulky chassis and drain battery life.

The other models use processors designed specifically for notebooks, which don't need the same bulky heat sinks to keep them cool. These notebooks have less outright power, but are smaller and lighter and don't need to be charged as often. If you want to use your notebook for over three hours on the move, you'll need a mobile processor.

INTEGRATED OR DEDICATED?

Similarly, some notebooks are designed to run 3D games, while others concentrate their strengths on everyday tasks. If you want to play games on your notebook, look for one with a dedicated graphics processor. Examples here range from the ageing Mobility Radeon 9700 used by Watford and Rock to the X700 chips used by Acer and Evesham. If you want to play the latest games the X700 is ideal, but the 9700 will allow for occasional forays into 3D action. If you don't want to play games at all, you should consider the other notebooks. They use a graphics processor integrated into the motherboard chipset. This cuts costs, allowing you to better spend your money elsewhere.



▲ A large legacy: Some notebooks still have parallel, serial and PS/2 ports to connect older peripherals

WIDEN YOUR PERSPECTIVE

Widescreen displays are becoming increasingly common on notebook computers and are especially useful for watching DVDs. Five of the notebooks on test have 15.4" 1,280x800 resolution widescreen displays, but the Mesh, MV and Toshiba have standard 15" 1,024x768 screens. These smaller, squarer displays aren't as good for watching video, but are arguably better for office tasks. If you want to work with large spreadsheets or open several windows at once, the Watford's 1,400x1,050 pixel display is ideal.

A fairly recent development in notebooks is the reflective LCD, which replaces the standard matt surface of a normal screen with a shiny gloss finish. This improves contrast and gives colours added vibrancy, making it perfect for games or DVDs. If you want your notebook primarily for work, though, these reflective screens can be a pain in bright lighting.

STORE AND RESTORE

Notebook hard disks are significantly smaller than their desktop counterparts. In fact, the largest notebook hard disk currently available holds just 100GB of data, whereas 500GB disks are available for larger PCs. As adding a second drive is not usually possible, it is important to get a notebook with enough storage for your needs. The Acer, HP and Mesh all have an impressive 80GB of storage, leaving plenty of room for multimedia files or games. The 60GB of space provided by the AJP, MV, Toshiba and Watford is reasonable for the price, but

the 40GB included by Rock and Evesham may prove frustrating. If you choose one of these notebooks, consider upgrading its hard disk when you buy.

PORTS OF CALL

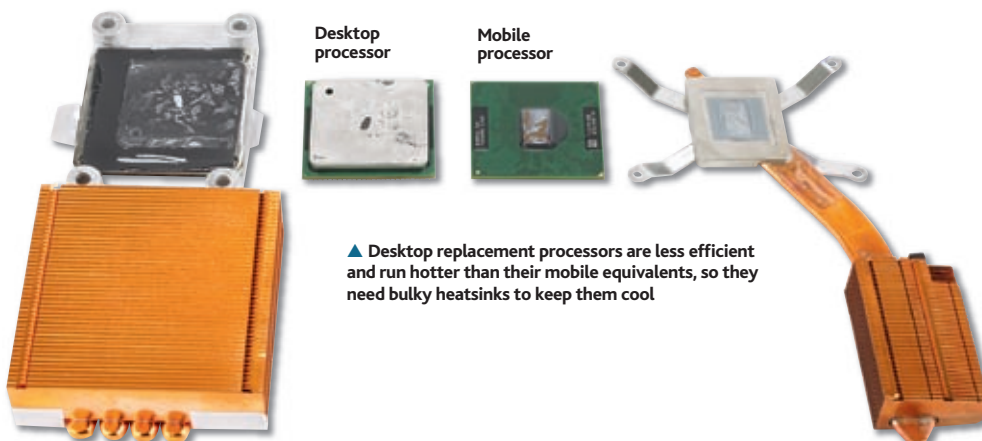
Almost all today's peripherals connect to your computer using a USB cable, so it's important to have enough USB2 ports for your needs. Mesh's Venture CSX has only two USB2 ports, which will make connecting several devices at once a pain. The others all have three or four ports, and AJP has included a generous five USB connectors.

LIKELY LONGEVITY

To run Windows XP well you should have at least 512MB of system memory. All the notebooks in the group include this much as standard, but Mesh has included twice as much. Its gigabyte of memory means it's perfectly suited to such memory-intensive tasks as photo editing.

One of the best ways to keep your computer up to date is to increase the amount of memory inside. This is much easier to do if your notebook has a free memory slot. The table on page 142 shows which notebooks can be upgraded this way.

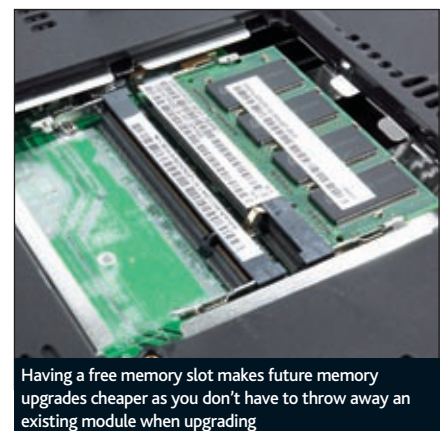
It is also important to consider how much support you will receive should your notebook go wrong. All the notebooks in this group have at least a one-year warranty that covers parts and labour, but Watford, Mesh and AJP cover labour costs for three years. Better still, Rock includes a superb three-year warranty for both parts and labour.



Desktop processor

Mobile processor

▲ Desktop replacement processors are less efficient and run hotter than their mobile equivalents, so they need bulky heatsinks to keep them cool



Having a free memory slot makes future memory upgrades cheaper as you don't have to throw away an existing module when upgrading



ACER Aspire 5014WLMi



RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £752 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.laptopsdirect.co.uk

DETAILS www.acer.co.uk

It's just over our price limit, but Acer's Aspire 5014WLMi has an impressive specification and the best all-round performance in this group.

FEATURES

The desktop processor-based Acer is the largest notebook on test in every dimension, and at 3.5kg it is also the heaviest. It's not fun to carry, but its large base makes room for plenty of ports. The left-hand side has a single FireWire socket, an infrared port and two CardBus slots, but there are no memory card slots. The Acer is the only notebook here with a DVI video output, making it perfect for connecting to a desktop LCD.

The keyboard flexes slightly when typing, but the keys have lots of travel and feedback. The touch pad has the most accurate pointer action here, but its buttons are wobbly. The Aspire's battery life of under three hours is mediocre, but its 80GB hard disk and DVD writer are useful.

The Aspire has a reflective screen, which gives improved colour saturation and contrast. The panel is very bright and colours are vibrant, but they become slightly washed out in the bottom inch of the display.

PERFORMANCE

Our benchmarks hardly troubled the Acer. Its 2.2GHz AMD Athlon 64 3400+ processor and 512MB of memory pushed it to a winning score of 4,000 in PCMark04, and it came second in the *Shopper* application benchmarks, just behind the Mesh. Its 3D performance is also excellent. The Mobility Radeon X700 is an impressive graphics chipset at this price, and its scores of 5,641 in 3DMark03 and 23.9fps in Doom 3 show it to be capable of running the latest games.

VERDICT

Size aside, the Acer Aspire 5014WLMi has very few disadvantages, as it is both powerful and well specified. If portability is not important to you, this is an excellent buy.

✓ Superb 2D and 3D performance; generous specification

✗ Large and heavy; mediocre battery life

SPECIFICATIONS 2.2GHz AMD Athlon 64 for Notebooks 3400+, 512MB RAM, 80GB hard disk, 128MB ATI Mobility Radeon X700 graphics, DVD+/-RW DL, 15.4" widescreen LCD



AJP Z71A-E

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £750 inc VAT

SUPPLIER AJP 020 8208 9744

DETAILS www.ajp.co.uk

AJP's Z71A is well built and has a decent battery, but it doesn't feel special enough to stand out in this group.

FEATURES

The Z71A is a large notebook, but its 2.95kg weight is about average for the notebooks on test. Its grey finish isn't particularly attractive, but it looks smart and is well built with little flex in the screen. The AJP has the most USB2 ports in the group, with one on the left of the chassis and four lined up on the rear. A FireWire port, four-in-one memory card reader and CardBus slot are on the left of the chassis. Its DVD writer can write to 8.5GB double-layer DVD+Rs.

The AJP's keyboard feels built to last, with large solid keys and no keyboard flex. Typing can be tiring, though, as the keys have little travel. The touch pad is very large and accurate, and the huge buttons have a solid click.

The 1,280x800 pixel widescreen display could be brighter, but it has excellent colour reproduction and good contrast with no graininess. Blacks are very dark, but whites have a grey tinge. With 190 minutes of battery life, you could take the Z71A on shorter trips.

PERFORMANCE

The Z71A's 1.4GHz Intel Celeron M 360 processor runs at a slower clock speed than any other in the group, and this is reflected in its performance. Its score of 2,441 in PCMark04 is the lowest on test apart from that of the Toshiba, and it came joint last in the *Shopper* application benchmarks with a score of 64. Its score of 925 in 3DMark03 shows that you could use the Z71A to play some older games.

VERDICT

The AJP seems overpriced. It has a reasonable keyboard and screen and plenty of USB2.0 ports, but it's not powerful enough to keep up with the competition.

✓ Good build quality

✗ Slow processor limits performance

SPECIFICATIONS 1.4GHz Intel Celeron M 360, 512MB RAM, 60GB hard disk, Intel 915GM integrated graphics, DVD+/-RW DL, 15.4" widescreen LCD



EVESHAM Quest Roma T28

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £750 inc VAT

SUPPLIER LowestOnWeb 08701 609500

DETAILS www.evesham.com

Evesham's Quest Roma T28 has enough graphics power to run the latest games as well as enough battery life for working on the move. However, its small hard disk is a letdown.

FEATURES

The Roma's black and silver finish makes it the best-looking notebook in the group, and it is also the slimmest. It is one of the lighter notebooks, weighing 2.85kg, and with nearly four hours of battery life it's a useful portable companion. Its stiff base and screen suggest that it could withstand the knocks that come with travelling.

Four USB2 ports are on the left and right of the chassis, and S-video and D-sub outputs are on the right side. The front of the chassis has a single FireWire port.

The Evesham's keyboard is one of the easiest in the group to use, with long key travel and well-judged feedback. The accurate touch pad makes navigating Windows easy, and the small buttons have a firm click. The reflective screen is the best in this group. It's bright, with excellent colour reproduction and contrast and the brightest whites. Unfortunately, Evesham has chosen a hard disk that holds just 40GB of data.

PERFORMANCE

The Roma uses a 1.6GHz AMD Turion 64 MT-28 processor. Its 2D performance was not spectacular, but its scores of 3,142 in PCMark04 and 78 in the *Shopper* benchmarks are in line with the other notebooks. The 3D performance generated by its Mobility Radeon X700 chipset was excellent. It scored 5,000 in 3DMark03 and produced a playable 23fps in Doom 3.

VERDICT

This is a desirable notebook with the best screen on test and impressive 3D performance. Its decent battery life makes it a good choice if you want to work on the move, but its 40GB hard drive is disappointingly small.

✓ Slim and stylish; great 3D performance and screen

✗ Small hard disk

SPECIFICATIONS 1.6GHz AMD Turion 64 Mobile Technology MT-28, 512MB RAM, 40GB hard disk, 128MB ATI Mobility Radeon X700 graphics, DVD+/-RW DL, 15.4" widescreen LCD



HP Pavilion dv4045EA

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £750 inc VAT

SUPPLIER HP 08452 704222

DETAILS www.hp.co.uk

HP's Pavilion dv4045EA is a well-designed notebook with a great screen and generous hard drive. Unfortunately, it's not that powerful.

FEATURES

The HP's large dimensions are offset by its slimness, but at 3kg it's still a heavy notebook. Its keyboard surround has helpful icons detailing the ports below on the sides of the chassis. This makes connecting peripherals easy. There are two USB2 ports on each side of the chassis, as well as FireWire and a six-in-one card reader on the left. It is one of only three notebooks here with an 80GB hard disk, and it has a decent 218 minutes of battery life.

The keyboard's matt black keys have plenty of travel, but its springy action can make typing tiring. The touch pad is not particularly accurate, but its enormous buttons are easy to use.

Like the Acer and Evesham, the HP has a reflective screen. Colours are vibrant, but they soon become bleached out at the bottom of the screen. Large blocks of colour also appear grainy.

PERFORMANCE

The HP's 1.6GHz Pentium M 730 processor is one of the faster mobile processors in this group, but its overall performance was disappointing. It scored only 2,803 in PCMark04, and its score of 74 overall in the Shopper application benchmarks is only average. The HP has no dedicated 3D graphics processor, instead using an integrated Intel 915GM graphics chip. It was able to run our 3DMark03 test, producing a score of 821, but couldn't run our Doom 3 benchmark. Gamers should look elsewhere.

VERDICT

HP's Pavilion dv4045EA impresses thanks to its thoughtful design, high-contrast screen, large hard disk and good battery life. Its performance is fairly disappointing, though, so unless battery life is your main priority the Acer is a better choice.

✓ Large hard disk; great design

✗ Uninspiring performance

SPECIFICATIONS 1.6GHz Intel Pentium M 730, 512MB RAM, 80GB hard disk, Intel 915GM integrated graphics, DVD+/-RW DL, 15.4" widescreen LCD



MESH Venture CSX

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £750 inc VAT

SUPPLIER Mesh Computers 08700 464747

DETAILS www.meshcomputers.com

The Mesh Venture CSX shares its chassis with the MV (right), but has a much faster processor and a gigabyte of system memory.

FEATURES

The Mesh looks very similar to the MV, but there are a number of differences to its chassis layout. The front panel has FireWire and an infrared port for connecting older mobile phones and PDAs, and the left-hand side contains separate card readers for five types of memory card. The rear panel holds three legacy ports and a pair of USB2 sockets.

The keyboard has a decent length of key travel but flexes when you type, making it a little uncomfortable. The touch pad is slightly skittish, but its buttons are comfortable to work with.

The Venture is one of only three notebooks here with a 1,024x768 display, and one of four with a standard 4:3 screen. This is large enough for most applications, but you may struggle when working on large spreadsheets or photos. The display is bright with vibrant colours, but its vertical viewing angles are limited. The notebook has a large 80GB hard disk, but the worst battery life in the group. It ran for a measly 112 minutes without mains power.

PERFORMANCE

The Mesh has a 3GHz Intel Pentium 4 530 processor and a gigabyte of RAM, and this combination gained it the top spot in our Shopper application benchmarks with a score of 95. Like most Pentium 4 computers, it was particularly impressive in the video-encoding test. Its integrated SiS graphics were unable to run either of our 3D tests.

VERDICT

The Mesh is a powerful performer with a large hard disk and many different connectivity options. Unfortunately, its poor battery life and 3D performance are less impressive, and it would benefit from more USB ports.

✓ Powerful 2D performance; bright screen

✗ Only two USB2 ports; keyboard flexes

SPECIFICATIONS 3GHz Intel Pentium 4 530, 1GB RAM, 80GB hard disk, SiS M650 integrated graphics, DVD+/-RW DL, 15" LCD



MV Sirius 15 AMD Shopper

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £717 inc VAT

SUPPLIER MV 08718 554668

DETAILS www.go-mv.com

The third-cheapest notebook on test, the MV Sirius 15 AMD is fairly powerful, but its battery life and 3D performance are mediocre.

FEATURES

The MV has a fairly compact chassis, but it is thick when closed. At 3.4kg it is also heavier than all the others here except the Acer, and its battery life of 158 minutes isn't really enough to stray too far from the mains.

The thick base feels very sturdy, and the screen refuses to flex under pressure. There are three USB2 ports on the left of the chassis alongside a memory card reader, and the rear of the notebook holds parallel, serial and PS/2 ports. There's also a D-sub output for an external display, but no S-video socket for connecting a TV.

The MV may share its chassis with the Mesh, but its keyboard is far superior. It doesn't flex while typing, and the keys have lots of travel and feedback. The recessed touch pad is rather inaccurate and woolly, but its buttons are comfortable to use. The screen is one of the brightest on test with good contrast, but the vertical viewing angles are quite narrow. MV includes a 60GB hard disk and a double-layer DVD writer.

PERFORMANCE

Despite using the same 2.2GHz AMD Athlon 64 3400+ processor as the Acer, the MV did not perform nearly as well in our benchmarks. Its integrated graphics contributed to a low score of 3,013 in PCMark04, but it managed a very good 85 in the Shopper benchmarks. Its integrated VIA graphics chipset couldn't run our 3D tests.

VERDICT

The MV is a well-built notebook with a good screen and keyboard, and it is £33 cheaper than most of the other notebooks on test. Only the lack of any dedicated 3D hardware and its mediocre battery life let it down.

✓ Good screen and keyboard

✗ Below-average battery life

SPECIFICATIONS 2.2GHz AMD Athlon 64 for Notebooks 3400+, 512MB RAM, 60GB hard disk, VIA S3G integrated graphics, DVD+/-RW DL, 15" LCD



ROCK Pegasus Ti CS

RATING ★★

PRICE £750 inc VAT

SUPPLIER Rock Direct 08709 909090

DETAILS www.rockdirect.com

Rock's Pegasus Ti CS is a slim notebook with good overall performance and an excellent screen and keyboard, but it has a small hard disk and can't write to DVD discs.

FEATURES

The Rock is a slim and stylish black and silver notebook that feels durable. It includes three USB2 ports, D-sub and S-video outputs, a FireWire socket and an SD card reader. It's reasonably portable, weighing 2.9kg, and has a battery life of over three hours.

The Pegasus has the best keyboard in the group, with long travel and good feedback from the keys. However, although the touch pad is accurate, its buttons feel spongy. The screen is also impressive. Its widescreen resolution of 1,280x800 is enough for most applications and perfect for watching DVDs, and it has even colour across the surface with excellent contrast. Its speakers also have clear sound and lots of treble and bass.

The Rock disappoints when it comes to storage. It is one of only two notebooks in the group with a 40GB hard disk, and the only notebook here without a DVD writer.

PERFORMANCE

The Rock produced a decent performance in our 2D benchmarks. Its score of 3,429 in PCMark04 is the second best here, and it achieved a reasonable 74 in the *Shopper* benchmarks. It also has a dedicated graphics processor. Its scores of 3,314 in 3DMark03 and 11.3fps in Doom 3 show that it can play older games well, but it will struggle with the latest titles.

VERDICT

The Rock scores points for its excellent keyboard and high-quality screen, as well as having good 2D and reasonable 3D performance. Unfortunately, its small hard disk and poor optical drive make it hard to recommend.

✓ Slim; good keyboard and screen

✗ Small hard disk; no DVD writer

SPECIFICATIONS 1.7GHz Intel Pentium M 735, 512MB RAM, 40GB hard disk, 128MB ATI Mobility Radeon 9700 graphics, DVD/CD-RW, 15.4" widescreen LCD



TOSHIBA Satellite L10 PSL10E-00M004EN

RATING ★★★

PRICE £680 inc VAT

SUPPLIER Toshiba 08704 448944

DETAILS www.toshiba.co.uk

Like Watford's Precision, the Satellite L10 costs under £700. It has a great screen and feels well built, but lacks the 3D graphics of its rival.

FEATURES

Toshiba's Satellite L10 is aimed chiefly at business users, so its looks are sombre rather than stylish. It feels solid, although there is some flex in the screen and base. Toshiba has also provided the bare minimum of ports. There are three USB2 ports and a D-sub video output, but no memory card slot or S-video socket.

The Satellite's keyboard is pleasant to use with nicely textured keys and no keyboard flex, but the keys are rather springy and could do with more travel. The recessed touch pad is accurate and the huge buttons have a satisfying click.

The Toshiba's bright, high-contrast screen is easy on the eyes, but the picture fades quickly when not viewed from straight on. It has a fairly large 60GB hard disk and a DVD writer, but it can't write to double-layer discs. Three hours of battery life is reasonable, but not really enough for a businessman on the road.

PERFORMANCE

The Toshiba uses Intel's 1.5GHz Celeron M 370 processor, which has half the amount of level 2 cache memory included in Pentium M chips. The combination of this budget processor and an outdated integrated graphics chipset hampers its performance. Its PCMark04 score of 2,439 is the worst here, and its score of 69 in the *Shopper* benchmarks beats only the Watford and AJP. It couldn't run either of our 3D tests.

VERDICT

The Toshiba is a competent and cheap notebook, but its below-average performance and dull styling mean it fails to stand out from the rest. The similarly priced Watford has better graphics performance and battery life for just £10 more.

✓ Cheaper than most

✗ Dull design; poor performance

SPECIFICATIONS 1.5GHz Intel Celeron M 370, 512MB RAM, 60GB hard disk, Intel 825GM integrated graphics, DVD+/-RW, 15" LCD



WATFORD Aries PowerXS Precision 1005

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £690 inc VAT

SUPPLIER Savastore 08716 661616

DETAILS www.savastore.com

Watford's Aries PowerXS Precision 1005 also costs less than £700. Its 2D performance is below average, but it has the power to play some older games and excellent battery life.

FEATURES

With its bright white exterior and striped lid, the Precision 1005 is easily the most striking notebook in this group. You'll either love or loathe its design. Its lid is slightly flimsy and creaks when you open or close it. Three USB2 ports are included, along with FireWire and parallel connectors.

Typing is comfortable as the keys have long travel, but they feel slightly wobbly. The huge touch pad suits the screen's high resolution, and the metal buttons are cool to the touch.

Its 1,400x1,050 pixel display is bright and clear, but colours can look washed out and lack the vibrancy of the Rock's screen. Watford has included a 60GB hard disk, but the DVD writer can't burn double-layer discs. The Precision 1005 is fairly portable at 2.95kg, and with over four hours of battery life it's the best notebook in the group for mobile computing.

PERFORMANCE

The Precision 1005 has the same 1.5GHz Intel Celeron M 370 processor as Toshiba's Satellite, but it performed better in PCMark04 thanks to its superior graphics hardware. It came bottom of the *Shopper* benchmarks, however, with a score of 64. Its ATI Mobility Radeon 9700 graphics processor isn't up to running the latest games, but it will let you get stuck into older titles. It scored 2,854 in our 3DMark03 test.

VERDICT

This is a desirable notebook computer at a low price. Its lightness and superb battery life make it a decent choice for working on the move, but its 2D performance is below average for this group.

✓ Cheap; excellent battery life

✗ Not particularly powerful; limited DVD writer

SPECIFICATIONS 1.5GHz Intel Celeron M 370, 512MB RAM, 60GB hard disk, 128MB ATI Mobility Radeon 9700 graphics, DVD+/-RW, 15" LCD



MANUFACTURER	ACER	AJP	EVESHAM	HP	
Model	Aspire 5014WLMi (LX.A6005.024)	Z71A-E	Quest Roma T28	Pavilion dv4045EA	
Rating	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★	
Processor	AMD Athlon 64 for Notebooks 3400+	Intel Celeron M 360	AMD Turion 64 Mobile Technology MT-28	Intel Pentium M 730	
Speed	2.2GHz	1.4GHz	1.6GHz	1.6GHz	
Memory installed	512MB	512MB	512MB	512MB	
Memory slots (free)	2 (1)	2 (0)	2 (0)	2 (0)	
Max memory	2GB	2GB	2GB	2GB	
BIOS	Phoenix	AMI	AMI	Phoenix	
Dimensions (HxWxD)	43x361x289mm	34x356x275mm	21x357x253mm	23x356x257mm	
Weight	3.5kg	2.95kg	2.85kg	3.0kg	
Sound	Realtek AC'97	Realtek AC'97	Realtek AC'97	SoundMAX integrated	
Pointing device	Touch pad	Touch pad	Touch pad	Touch pad	
DISPLAY					
Screen size	15.4"	15.4"	15.4"	15.4"	
Graphics adaptor	ATI Mobility Radeon X700	Intel 915GM integrated graphics	ATI Mobility Radeon X700	Intel 915GM integrated graphics	
Graphics outputs	D-sub, S-video, DVI	D-sub, S-video	D-sub, S-video	D-sub, S-video	
Graphics memory	128MB	64MB shared	128MB	128MB shared	
Native resolution	1,280x800	1,280x800	1,280x800	1,280x800	
STORAGE					
Hard disk (available)	80GB (72.5GB)	60GB (55.8GB)	40GB (37.2GB)	80GB (74.5GB)	
Optical drive	Internal DVD writer	Internal DVD writer	Internal DVD writer	Internal DVD writer	
Optical drive speeds	8X DVD+R, 8X DVD-R, 4X DVD+RW, 4X DVD-RW, 2.4X DVD+R DL, 24X CD-R, 10X CD-RW, 8X DVD-ROM, 24X CD-ROM	8X DVD+R, 8X DVD-R, 4X DVD+RW, 4X DVD-RW, 2.4X DVD+R DL, 24X CD-R, 24X CD-RW, 8X DVD-ROM, 24X CD-ROM	8X DVD+R, 8X DVD-R, 4X DVD+RW, 4X DVD-RW, 2.4X DVD+R DL, 24X CD-R, 10X CD-RW, 8X DVD-ROM, 24X CD-ROM	8X DVD+R, 8X DVD-R, 4X DVD+RW, 4X DVD-RW, 2.4X DVD+R DL, 24X CD-R, 16X CD-RW, 8X DVD-ROM, 24X CD-ROM	
Floppy disk	£35 inc VAT	£34 inc VAT	£40 inc VAT	No	
PORTS & EXPANSION					
USB2 ports	4	5	4	4	
FireWire	1	1	1	1	
Infrared port	Yes	No	No	No	
Bluetooth	No	No	No	No	
Networking	10/100/1,000 wired, 802.11b/g	10/100 wired, 802.11a/b/g	10/100 wired, 802.11b/g	10/100 wired, 802.11b/g	
CardBus slots	2	1	1	1	
Modem	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Legacy ports	None	None	None	None	
Other ports	None	Memory card reader (supports SD, MMC, MS, MS PRO), Minijack S/PDIF out	Memory card reader (supports SD, MMC, MS)	Memory card reader (supports SD, MMC, MS, SM, MS PRO, xD)	
EXTRAS					
Carrying case	£15 inc VAT	Yes	£30 inc VAT	£30 inc VAT	
Direct CD control	No	Yes	No	No	
Operating system	Windows XP Home	Windows XP Home	Windows XP Home	Windows XP Home	
Operating system restore option	Restore CDs	Windows CD	Restore CD	Restore CD	
Software included	Norton Antivirus 2005, NTI CD & DVD Maker 7	Nero Suite 3	Microsoft Works 8, Roxio Easy Media Creator Basic DVD Home, Computer Associates E-Trust Antivirus 2005	Microsoft Works 8, Sonic RecordNow 7, InterVideo WinDVD 5	
Other standard accessories	None	None	None	None	
Optional extras	Extra battery £99 inc VAT	Extra battery £116 inc VAT	Extra battery £90 inc VAT, upgrade to 60GB hard disk £10 inc VAT, 80GB £40 inc VAT	None	
BUYING INFORMATION					
Company founded	1979	1986	1983	1939	
Employees	5,600	30	418	140,000	
Tech support staff	150	6	84	Not disclosed	
Tech support times	Mon-Fri 9am-5pm	Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm, Sat 9am-2pm	Mon-Sat 9am-5pm	Mon-Fri 8.30am-6pm, Sat 10am-4pm	
Parts warranty	One year collect and return	One year RTB	One year RTB	One year collect and return	
Labour warranty	One year collect and return	Three years RTB	One year RTB	One year collect and return	
Price inc VAT and delivery	£752	£750	£750	£750	
Price ex VAT and delivery	£630	£638	£638	£638	
Manufacturer	www.acer.co.uk	www.ajp.co.uk	www.evesham.com	www.hp.co.uk	
Supplier	Laptops Direct	AJP	LowestOnWeb	HP	
Telephone	08452 262236	020 8208 9744	08701 609500	08452 704222	
Web address	www.laptopsdirect.co.uk	www.ajp.co.uk	www.lowestonweb.com/quest	www.hp.co.uk	



MESH	MV	ROCK	TOSHIBA	WATFORD
Venture CSX	Sirius 15 AMD Shopper	Pegasus Ti CS	Satellite L10 PSL10E-00M004EN	Aries PowerXS Precision 1005
★★★★	★★★	★★	★★	★★★★
Intel Pentium 4 530	AMD Athlon 64 for Notebooks 3400+	Intel Pentium M 735	Intel Celeron M 370	Intel Celeron M 370
3GHz	2.2GHz	1.7GHz	1.5GHz	1.5GHz
1GB	512MB	512MB	512MB	512MB
2 (0)	2 (1)	2 (0)	2 (1)	2 (1)
2GB	2GB	1GB	1GB	2GB
Phoenix	Phoenix	Insyde	Phoenix	AMI
25x328x274mm	36.5x329x275mm	32x357x257mm	38x331x279mm	27x328x280mm
3.2kg	3.4kg	2.9kg	2.7kg	2.95kg
Realtek AC'97	Realtek AC'97	Realtek AC'97	Conexant AC-Link audio	Realtek AC'97
Touch pad	Touch pad	Touch pad	Touch pad	Touch pad
15"	15"	15.4"	15"	15"
SIS M650 integrated graphics	VIA S3G integrated graphics	ATI Mobility Radeon 9700	Intel 852GM integrated graphics	ATI Mobility Radeon 9700
D-sub, S-video	D-sub	D-sub, S-video	D-sub	D-sub, S-video
64MB shared	64MB shared	128MB	64MB shared	128MB
1,024x768	1,024x768	1,280x800	1,024x768	1,400x1,050
80GB (74.4GB)	60GB (55.7GB)	40GB (37.1GB)	60GB (55.8GB)	60GB (52.6GB)
Internal DVD writer	Internal DVD writer	CD-RW/DVD combo drive	Internal DVD writer	Internal DVD writer
8X DVD+R, 8X DVD-R, 4X DVD+RW, 4X DVD-RW, 2.4X DVD+R DL, 24X CD-R, 24X CD-RW, 8X DVD-ROM, 24X CD-ROM	8X DVD+R, 8X DVD-R, 4X DVD+RW, 4X DVD-RW, 2.4X DVD+R DL, 24X CD-R, 24X CD-RW, 8X DVD-ROM, 24X CD-ROM	24X CD-R, 24X CD-RW, 8X DVD-ROM, 24X CD-ROM	8X DVD+R, 8X DVD-R, 4X DVD+RW, 4X DVD-RW, 24X CD-R, 10X CD-RW, 8X DVD-ROM, 24X CD-ROM	8X DVD+R, 4X DVD-R, 4X DVD+RW, 4X DVD-RW, 24X CD-R, 10X CD-RW, 8X DVD-ROM, 24X CD-ROM
£46 inc VAT	£35 inc VAT	£35 inc VAT	£30 inc VAT	£20 inc VAT
2	3	3	3	3
1	0	1	0	1
Yes	No	No	No	No
No	No	No	No	No
10/100 wired, 802.11b/g	10/100 wired, 802.11b/g	10/100 wired, 802.11b/g	10/100 wired, 802.11b/g	10/100 wired, 802.11b/g
1	1	1	1	1
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Parallel, Serial, PS/2	Parallel, Serial, PS/2	None	None	Parallel
Memory card reader (supports CF, SD, MMC, SM, MS), Minijack S/PDIF out	Memory card slot (supports SD, MMC, MS, MS PRO), Minijack S/PDIF out	Memory card reader (supports SD), Minijack S/PDIF out	None	Memory card reader (supports SD, MMC, SM)
Yes	Yes	Yes	No	£12 inc VAT
No	No	No	Yes	No
Windows XP Home	Windows XP Home	Windows XP Home	Windows XP Home	Windows XP Home
Windows CD	Windows CD and driver CD	Windows CD and driver CD	Restore CD	Restore CDs
Microsoft Works 8, Cyberlink PowerDVD 6	Roxio Easy Media Creator 7 Basic VCD Edition	Roxio Easy Media Creator 7 Basic VCD Edition, Ability Office 2002, Panda Titanium Antivirus 2005, Sonic Cineplayer 3.21	Microsoft Office OneNote 2003, Microsoft Works 7, WinDVD Creator 2 Platinum	Panda Titanium Antivirus 2004, Roxio Easy CD Creator 7, Microsoft Works 8, CyberLink PowerDVD 5
None	None	None	None	None
Extra battery £92 inc VAT	Extra battery £116 inc VAT, Bluetooth £58 inc VAT	Extra battery £116 inc VAT, internal DVD writer £93 inc VAT	Extra battery £100 inc VAT	Extra battery £48 inc VAT
1987	2004	1992	1985	1972
275	50	50	100 (UK)	130
42	8	8	50	20
Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm	Mon-Fri 9am-5pm, Sat 10am-2pm	Mon-Fri 9am-5pm, Sat 10am-2pm	Mon-Fri 8am-6pm	Mon-Fri 9am-5pm, Sat 9am-1pm
One year RTB	One year collect and return	Three years collect and return	One year collect and return	One year return to base
Three years RTB	One year collect and return, two years RTB	Three years collect and return	One year collect and return	Three years return to base
£750	£717	£750	£680	£690
£599	£575	£638	£569	£572
www.meshcomputers.com	www.go-mv.com	www.rockdirect.com	www.toshiba.co.uk	www.savastore.com
Mesh Computers	MV	Rock Direct	Toshiba	Savastore
08700 464747	08718 554668	08709 909090	08704 448944	08716 661616
www.meshcomputers.com	www.go-mv.com	www.rockdirect.com	www.toshiba.co.uk	www.savastore.com

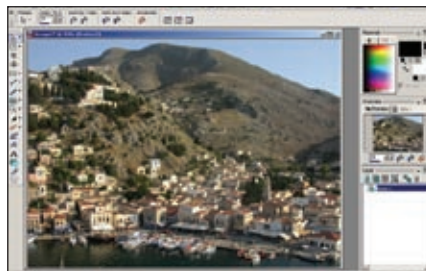
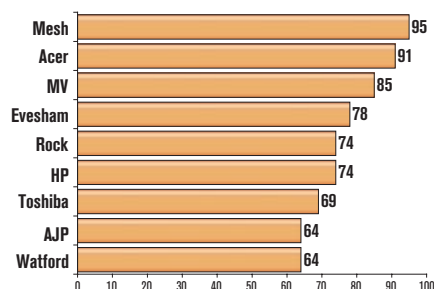




BENCHMARKS

2D Performance **Shopper application tests**

Overall



SETTINGS We run our application tests at 1,024x768 resolution and in 32-bit colour
WEB www.computershopper.co.uk

Video-Encoding Test

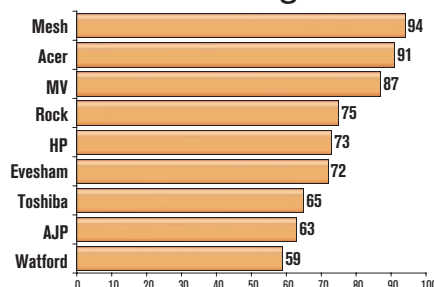
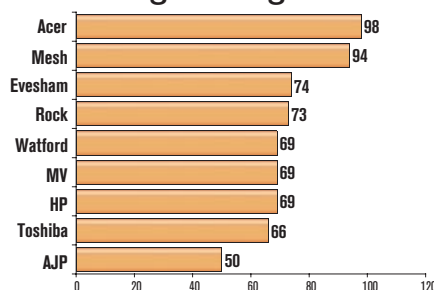


Image-Editing Test



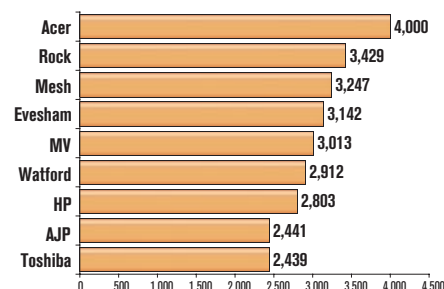
Computer Shopper's 2D benchmarks are designed to show how PCs stand up to the toughest tasks Windows can throw at them. Today's PCs have no problem running office applications such as Word and Excel, so we have chosen to focus our tests on areas where you could experience difficulties.

In version 1.0 there are three scripts. Encoding a short video to MPEG 2 format is an extremely processor-intensive task, and one that anyone interested in transferring home videos to DVD will have to tackle. Our image-editing test simulates a session of photo enhancement using Paint Shop Pro, culminating with the memory-intensive composition of a panorama from a set of digital snaps. Finally, a set of MP3s is generated by ripping an audio CD.

We compiled all the tests with the help of our sister magazine for performance computing, *Custom PC*. By tackling advanced tasks the tests will give you warning of any speed issues you could encounter. Figures are relative to a reference Evesham Athlon 64 3500+ system, which scores 100 in all tests.

PCMark04

PCMark04



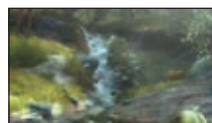
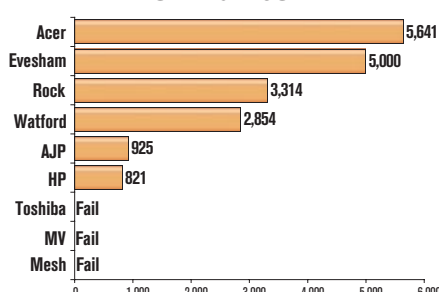
SETTINGS We run PCMark04 at 1,024x768 resolution and in 32-bit colour
WEB www.futuremark.com

As well as our own benchmarks, we test all desktop and notebook PCs using Futuremark's PCMark04. You can download a free version of PCMark04 from www.futuremark.com/download, so you can compare our results with those from your own computer, which is useful if you want to see how much performance you might gain by upgrading.

PCMark04 performs a variety of tests to measure system performance. These include testing the hard disk, memory, processor and graphics. All the tests mimic the stresses placed on your computer by actual applications, giving a fair indicator of how powerful a PC is.

3D Performance **3DMark03**

3DMark03

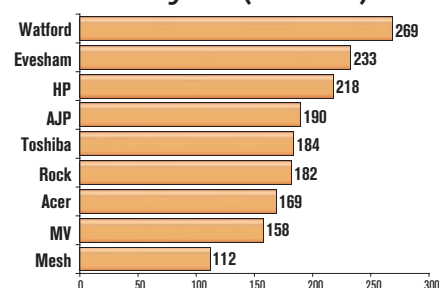


SETTINGS 1,024x768 resolution, 32-bit colour, default settings
WEB www.futuremark.com

3DMark03 comprises four game tests from four different genres. Each test involves real-time rendering of a 3D environment. 3DMark03 gives you a good idea of how well a PC will run games that are currently on the market. You can download a free limited version of 3DMark03 from the Futuremark website.

Portability

MobileMark2002 battery life (minutes)

LABS VERDICT **£750 NOTEBOOK CHALLENGE**

Not so long ago any notebook costing under £800 would have suffered from a cheap processor, dim screen and poor battery life. Among today's models we found notebooks with powerful processors, the latest DVD writers and batteries that lasted over four hours. Three particularly impressed us.

Watford's Aries PowerXS Precision 1005 might not be particularly powerful, but it's very cheap and can run for hours away from the mains. If you need portability without a high

price, it's a good choice. If you can spend a bit more, Evesham's Quest Roma T28 is more powerful and almost as portable. Spend £10 more on a hard disk upgrade and it's a great notebook for use at home or on the road.

If you just want a PC you can carry from desk to desk, though, there can be only one choice. Acer's Aspire 5014WLMi is fairly bulky, but it offers power and features unheard of for under £800. It's deserving of our Best Buy award. **CS**

ACER Aspire 5014WLMi

